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CURRENT NOTES ON ANTHROPOLOGY.

EUROPEAN ETHNOGRAPHICAL MUSEUMS.

A very useful report on the ethnological museums of central Europe has been published by the Dutch Ministry of the Interior, from the studies of Dr. J. D. E. Schmeltz (*Ethnographische Musea in Midden-Europa*, E. J. Brill, Leiden, 4to. pp. 109).

It contains the observations made during his personal visits to all the great collections of Berlin, Vienna, Munich, Paris, London, etc., in the summer of 1895. Many of the more interesting objects are described and figured, and both the contents of the Museums, their arrangements for display and their architectural plans are discussed. Dr. Schmeltz is thoroughly conversant with the literature of modern ethnography, and his numerous references to monographs and special articles are a fruitful lesson in themselves. There is an excellent index, in which I note that 'America' includes objects in twenty of the collections visited.

ETHNOGRAPHICAL SURVEY OF GREAT BRITAIN.

THE fourth report of the committee of the British Association which has this survey in charge has been published. It is of exceptional interest, its leading feature being an article by Mr. G. Lawrence Gomme, on the method of determining the value of folk-lore as ethnological data. In this he explains the principles of the classification and analysis of the facts gleaned by folk-lore researches, and illustrates the scientific method of handling them by a discussion of the fire rites and ceremonies retained among the rural population of the United Kingdom. The conclusions he reaches are valuable, both in themselves and as a fine exemplification of the correct plan of utilizing such material to enlighten us as to early considerations of social life, concerning which history tells little or nothing.

The general report is drawn up by the Chairman, Mr. E. W. Brabrook, and is accompanied by notes from the Secretary, Mr. E. Sidney Hartland.

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NOTES ON INORGANIC CHEMISTRY.

M. BERTHELOT has recently published in the *Comptes Rendus* analyses of weapons, tools, etc., from Tello, in Chaldea. Their date is put from 4000 to 3000 B. C. A large lance and a hatchet were found to be approximately pure copper, and another hatchet was of copper with traces of arsenic and phosphorus, by which it seems to have been hardened. No trace of tin was present in any case. Thus in Chaldea an 'age of copper' seems to have preceded the 'age of bronze.' An egg-shaped object from the same locality, weighing 121 grains, was of iron; an ingot of white metal was 95 per cent. silver; a leaf of yellow gold was found to contain considerable quantities of silver.

THE following order appears in the English scientific journals: "In consequence of the growing importance of carbid of calcium, and the fact that the mere contact of moisture with this material causes a dangerous evolution of the highly inflammable gas known as acetylene, the Home Secretary has caused inquiries to be made into the subject, with the result that an Order in Council has to-day been made under the 14th section of the 'Petroleum Act, 1871,' bringing carbid of calcium within the operation of that Act. Accordingly, from the date on which such order comes into force, viz., 1st April, 1897, it will be unlawful to keep carbid of calcium, except in virtue of a license to be obtained from the local authority under the Petroleum Act."

THE Council of the Chemical Society (London) have awarded the Longstaff medal to Professor William Ramsay, F. R. S.,

for the discovery of helium and his share in the investigation of argon.

THE last Proceedings of the Chemical Society contain a further study in spectrographic analysis by W. N. Hartley and H. Ramage. The alums are found to contain all the alkalies as well as copper, silver, gallium, thallium, nickel and manganese. Of these the thallium comes from the pyrites, but the other elements from the aluminous minerals, bauxite and shale. The Stassfurt minerals were found to contain no rubidium, cesium, gallium or thallium, and only barest traces of elements other than the principal ones composing the minerals. Steel (from Middlesborough) contained the alkali metals, calcium, copper, silver, gallium, manganese and lead. It is pointed out that this method of spectrographic analysis might lead to results of practical importance in the study of railroad steels, as copper, (?) silver, gallium and lead have not been considered in dealing with commercial irons, and their influence upon the physical properties is unknown.

THE *Gazzetta Chimica Italiana* contains an article by U. Antony and T. Benelli on the action of water of various degrees of purity on lead pipes. The greatest solvent action was in the case of distilled water, especially when saturated with air. Aeration with carbon dioxid retarded the action one-half. Water containing calcium sulfate or sodium sulfate possesses about one-half the solvent power of pure water, and the action here also was much retarded by aeration with carbon dioxid. Bicarbonate of lime had only about one-fourth the solvent power of pure water, but when aerated by carbon dioxid its action was nearly doubled. Common salt had little action except in the presence of carbon dioxid, and seemed to often slightly diminish the solvent powers of other salts. These results are rather at variance with the generally accepted ideas

and seem to show that waters with permanent hardness would be seriously contaminated by passage through lead pipes and ordinary hard waters only somewhat less so. The maximum amount of lead dissolved was 130 parts per million, for five days contact of 150 ccm. ordinary distilled water with 285 sq. cm. lead; the minimum 6.8 parts per million for water containing sodium chlorid and aerated with air.

IN the same number of the *Gazzetta* Professors Antony and A. Lucchesi describe the reaction of an excess of mercurous chlorid on auric chlorid with the production of the characteristic color of purple of Cassius. Similar results are obtained with cuprous chlorid and the chlorid of gold. When barium sulfate and mercurous chlorid are suspended in water and auric chlorid added, the barium sulfate takes up the gold and becomes the color of the purple of Cassius. From these experiments the authors conclude that the true purple of Cassius is not a definite compound, but merely stannic acid mechanically colored with metallic gold.

J. L. H.

SCIENTIFIC NOTES AND NEWS.

THE THREATENED LEGISLATION AGAINST SCIENCE AND EDUCATION.

THE Ways and Means Committee of the House, either convinced by argument or coerced by the force of public opinion, has retracted the duty on scientific apparatus and books imported for institutions in cases in which the apparatus and books are not manufactured in the United States. It is satisfactory to find that the committee is willing to reconsider its ill-advised action, even though it has but partially corrected its blunders. The provision imposing a duty on instruments and books also manufactured in the United States is ambiguous and will cause endless confusion. If the Encyclopædia Britannica is pirated in America will that prevent its importation for a library? If a microscope is manufactured in America will that prevent the importation of all instruments